

## The Preliminary Certificate

The Archbishops' Preliminary Certificate is open to anyone actively involved as a singer or instrumentalist in Christian worship, younger or older. The aim is not only to develop practical work, but to encourage attentive listening and reflection on the role of music in worship.

There is an examination, whose tasks are described in **Sections 1** and **2** below. **Section 3** gives details of how to enter. **Section 4** will help you prepare for the examination.

### 1 WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO (OUTLINE)

- Sing or play two *contrasting* pieces of your own choice
- Sing or play unfamiliar music
- Three listening tests
- Project
- Questions (Viva voce)

### 2 WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO (DETAIL)

- Sing or play two *contrasting* pieces of your own choice

These should be pieces that you would sing or play in your place of worship before, during or after an act of worship

The two pieces together should last from 2 to 4 minutes

- Sing or play unfamiliar music

### EITHER

1 *Sing or play at sight*. You have one minute to prepare some simple music that the examiner will give you.

When entering for the examination you must choose one of the four options below OR state that you wish to offer an alternative instrument (e.g. flute or trumpet). In the latter case, you must also say if you wish your test to be a hymn tune or a worship song.

§ Sing the soprano, alto, tenor or bass part (as suits your voice) from a simple common-metre hymn tune in 3/4 or 4/4 time (The examiner will give you the tonic chord and the first two notes, and then you must sing unaccompanied)

§ Sing the melody of a simple worship song (not more than 16 bars of 4/4 time, including verse and chorus)

§ On a keyboard instrument, play all four parts together from a simple common-metre hymn tune in 3/4 or 4/4 time. (Organists can choose whether or not to use the pedals)

§ On a guitar (acoustic or electric) or keyboard, improvise an accompaniment based on the chords of a simple worship song (not more than 16 bars of 4/4 time, including verse and chorus)

**OR**

2 *Sing from memory.* The examiner will play a short melody **twice**. You must repeat it unaccompanied, using any vowel sound. You will be given the starting note. The length of the melody will be not more than 8 bars of 4/4 time or 12 bars of 3/4 time

- Three listening tests

- o For each test the examiner will play a simple passage of music **twice**. You will be given a correct printed version. You must identify the errors that the examiner deliberately makes

- o *Interpretation.* You must identify **two** errors, which will involve any **two** of the following:

- § tempo

- § articulation (for example, where music marked *legato* is played *staccato*)

- § dynamics

- o *Rhythm.* You must identify **two** errors of rhythm. You must also say if each note is longer or shorter than it should have been

- o *Wrong notes.* You must identify **two** errors of pitch (wrong notes). You must also say if each note is higher or lower than it should have been

- Project: **Choose ONE of the following three tasks**

- o 1 *Written project.* Submit a written project or essay of between 800 and 1200 words. Choose the topic yourself, but see **Sections 3.6, 4.7 and 4.8** for guidance. Credit will be given for well-chosen musical examples and illustrations, and for correctly-referenced quotations, comments and sources

- o 2 *Presentation.* In the examination, present a talk lasting 10–15 minutes. Choose the topic yourself, but see **Sections 3.6, 4.7 and 4.8** for guidance. Credit will be given for well-chosen and correctly-referenced examples and illustrations, which should include **at least one** of the following:

- § brief recorded extracts

- § powerpoint slides or other visual display

- § performance (singing solo and/or with others, playing solo and/or with others)

- § (extracts from) original composition(s)

- o 3 *Composition.* Compose **one** or **two** pieces lasting (together) between 1 minute 30 seconds and 2 minutes 30 seconds. Your music must be for voice(s) and/or instrument(s) regularly available to you, and must be suitable for use before, during or after worship. Submit a

recording, and/or a printed or handwritten score. See **Sections 4.10** and **4.11** for further guidance

- Questions (Viva voce). In this informal conversation with your examiner, you will be asked some simple questions designed to show what you know and can do. Questions will be based on
- *Your written project, presentation or composition(s)*
- *Worship* (any form of worship regularly used in your place of worship – e.g. the Eucharist, Family Service, or Evensong)
- *Your prepared performances*. Questions may concern: instrumental or vocal technique; information about the pieces you played or sung, and/or (if the music is notated) dynamic or expressive or technical markings in the scores, or recognition of pitch, note-values, key signatures (major and minor keys), time signatures, or Italian terms

### **3 ENTERING FOR THE CERTIFICATE**

3.1 You need not be a member of the Guild of Church Musicians, but you are warmly invited to become one.

3.2 You can obtain an entry form from the Chairman of the Academic Board, Dr Hugh Benham, whose email is [exams@gcm.org.uk](mailto:exams@gcm.org.uk) Your entry may be made at any time of the year.

3.3 You should return your completed entry form by post to the Chairman, together with the examination fee of £40.00, payable to 'The Guild of Church Musicians'. Entries may be made at any time of the year.

3.4 The Chairman will arrange the date and venue of the examination in consultation with you as candidate, and with the examiner.

3.5 Your examination will normally be held in your own church, or school, or at another approved centre. A piano, organ or other suitable keyboard instrument must be available.

3.6 As soon as possible after entry – and not less than a month before the examination date – you must notify the Chairman of the titles of the contrasting pieces that you will play or sing. **If you are planning to submit a written project or to give a presentation, your topic should be submitted for approval.**

3.7 If you are submitting a written project or composition(s), the work must be posted to the examiner at least 10 days before the examination.

3.8 From February 2020, In order to pass, you must gain an overall mark of 60–69% in the examination as a whole (in other words, you do not need to gain 60% in every section). An overall mark of 70 – 79% in the examination as a whole

represents a Merit. A mark of 80% (or more) in the examination as a whole (including a pass in every section) represents a Distinction.

3.9 The result will usually be issued within two weeks of the examination.

3.10 If successful, you will be awarded a certificate, and you will be entitled to wear a special Guild medal (the cost of which is **not** included in the £40.00 examination fee. Certificates and medals may be presented at one of The Guild's Awards Services, or at a church, chapel, cathedral or other place where you regularly worship.

## **4 APPENDIX**

If the following notes do not answer any queries about the examination, please contact the Chairman of the Academic Board.

### *Your contrasting pieces*

4.1 Your pieces could be, for example, hymns (not necessarily with all verses), worship songs, anthems, solo songs, voluntaries or solo instrumental works.

4.2 'Contrasting pieces' might be of different types (e.g. a hymn and an anthem) or of different characters (e.g. a quick, cheerful song in a major key and a slow, melancholy one in a minor key).

4.3 The Guild does not set a level of difficulty. First and foremost, you should choose music that you can sing or play with confidence. However, if you are choosing pieces from the syllabuses of bodies such as the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, it is good to aim for Grade 3 (or higher).

4.4 You are responsible for providing any accompanist or accompanying group that may be needed. The examiner will not act as accompanist.

### *Unfamiliar music*

4.5 Remember that there are two options, from which you choose one. The second option is intended particularly for those unaccustomed to staff notation.

### *Three listening tests*

4.6 Sample listening tests will be available free of charge from the Chairman of the Academic Board.

### *Project*

4.7 If you choose to submit a written project or give a presentation, your first task is to find a suitable topic. Finding a suitable topic does not guarantee a successful outcome, of course, but choice of an *unsuitable* topic can lead to major problems. (To help you avoid such problems, you must submit your topic to the Chairman of the Academic Board for approval, as **Section 3.6** indicates.)

4.8 Here are a few suggestions for suitable topics – but remember that there are many others, and that you must choose one to fit your own circumstances and interests. (*Note:* The word ‘church’ below could be replaced by ‘chapel’, ‘school’, etc. as appropriate.)

- The role of the choir (*or* the cantor *or* the organist *or* the music group) in worship at your church
- A review of the music that you have sung or played in church (in any given period of not more than four weeks)
- A review of the music used in a recent ‘special service’ (such as a marriage service, a carol service or an act of remembrance)
- Music played before and after services at your church
- References to music in (particular book(s) of) the Bible

4.9 If you give a Presentation (rather than submit a Written project), you are responsible for providing, setting up and working any equipment to be used in the examination.

4.10 Composition(s) for the third project option might, for example,

- set the scene for worship, or provide an effective postlude
- be settings for unison voices and organ or piano of short liturgical texts – for example, Kyrie (‘Lord, have mercy’), Sanctus (‘Holy, Holy, Holy’) or Agnus Dei (‘(O) Lamb of God’)
- worship songs for soloist or unison voices with keyboard or guitar accompaniment

You may offer four-part hymn tunes, chants or short introits or anthems, but you should be aware that the level of harmonic skill needed to compose these successfully is greater than is expected for this qualification. The mark scheme shows what the examiner will be looking for in a successful composition.

4.11 You must submit a recording and/or a score for each piece.

You must submit your recording on a CD playable on standard domestic hi-fi equipment (not, for example, as MP3 or wav files).

Scores may be printouts from software packages such as Sibelius or Finale, or may be handwritten. If your score does not give a complete

picture of what is sung and/or played (e.g. if it is a lead sheet), you **must** provide a recording as well.

You will not automatically be awarded extra credit for providing both a recording and a score. Your aim should be to show the examiner as clearly and fully as possible how your piece(s) are meant to sound.